

approach the troop of langurs and then lying in a small circle with their bellies to the earth, muzzles pointed towards the troop, would identify a langur sitting on the ground far away from a tree. Then one or two of the jackals would run towards the langur at great speed and before the langur can react to reach the safety of a tree would leap at its throat and bring the animal down. Usually the prey is a subadult langur and the adults of the langur troop do try to put up some resistance by slapping the jackal with their palms or by trying to bite. Soon other jackals of the pack converge on the scene of action and the langurs finally give up.

In the last few years the jackal population in Kanha National park has gone up considerably and now it is emerging as a potential predator. Hunting in small packs, the jackals are often seen pulling down fawns of Chital *Axix axis* and are even responsible for high fawn predation in the Hard-ground Barasingha *Cervus duvauceli branderi* of Kanha National Park.

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4. RAT KILLING BY A JACKAL (*CANIS AUREUS*)

There is a small village, Veema, about 60 Km from Udaipur City, Rajasthan. Uncultivable enclosed land is called Beed in Mewar. On 13th June, 1995, I was crossing a Beed near this village when I spotted a Jackal at 6.10 p.m. I was near a Babool tree (*Acacia nilotica*). Slowly I crouched behind the tree to observe the Jackal. There was scanty vegetation in this Beed. Apart from seven Babool trees, there were a few bushes mostly of *Zizyphus* species.

The Jackal slowly and cautiously moved diagonally away from me. It stopped near a very small bush about 50 m from me. Some excavated fresh soil was visible from my position and I guessed that it might have been a burrow of some rat.

The Jackal started moving around the bush in a haphazard way sniffing the ground. After 10 minutes of this reconnaissance it stopped near the excavated mound of earth and urinated there. Suddenly it dashed towards my tree. As I followed its movements, I saw that there was a burrow in between two bushes about 30 m from me and from this burrow two pups of the Jackal emerged. The female Jackal rushed towards them and pushed them back into the burrow. Again she went to the place and started excavating the earth beyond the small bush. After excavating the earth it again refilled it with her hind legs. In this way she dug the earth at five different places near the bush and refilled them. After a pause of 3 minutes she moved to the place where she had urinated and started digging

the earth frantically. After some time she disappeared into the burrow.

After some time she emerged from the burrow, hind quarters first, with something in its mouth and moved towards the burrow where its pups were. I could make out that it was carrying a dead rat and from coloration I can reasonably say that it was a Metad (*Millardia meltada*). It entered its own burrow again, emerged from it and moved towards the freshly excavated burrow and picked up another rat. In this fashion it removed three rats and two young ones and deposited them in its burrow or fed them to its pups.

I came out of hiding and examined the area well. The Jackal had ascertained the most often used hole of the rat colony. It blocked the hole by urinating over it. Apparently smell of fresh urine of the Jackal kept the rats from using this hole for escape. The Jackal found out the alternate holes of escape and after excavating partially and refilling them, the Jackal plugged all the escape routes. It then excavated the main entrance, reached the chamber and killed the rats. The whole episode took 43 minutes.

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